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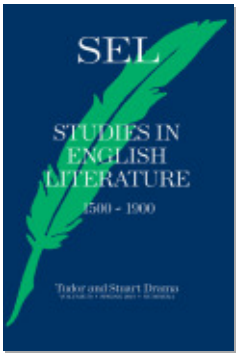

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ERNEST B. GILMAN

Among a number of changes to the story of the unfortunate Duchess, the questions provoked by two of John Webster's most consequent innovations have been the focus of a good deal of critical commentary. First, why should the playwright have chosen to depart from all the previous versions of the tale in order to afflict Duke Ferdinand with "A very pestilent disease" that "They call *Licanthropia*," the bizarre delusion that one has turned into a wolf?[1] Second, why should it matter that the duke and his sister the Duchess are now become twins? In what follows, I turn to a third, apparently inconsequential addition to the story, to ask why, at the moment when the Duchess invites Antonio to their "marriage bed" (I.i.479), she should call to mind the device of an "old tale, in *Alexander* and *Lodowicke*," whereby Antonio, if he pleases, might "Lay a naked sword betweene us, [to] keepe us chast" (I.i.483–4)? Is there an underlying thread that ties these three additions together? My claim is that focusing more closely on the old tale than critics have done hitherto reconfigures the play as Webster's *genera mixta*: a tale of friendship in the tradition (and violation) of the ethos of *amicitia perfecta*, woven into the tragedy of the Duchess's ill-fated marriage and the revenge exacted upon his sister and "dearest friend" by her brother the duke (IV.ii.267).

Apart from the Cambridge editors' gloss to a contemporary ballad and a reference to a lost play of the same name, the possible significance of this old tale has gone unremarked.[2] This omission is understandable. Mention of the old tale would seem to be a casual allusion, nothing more than a bit of banter on the

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part of the Duchess. At that moment the Duchess is being coy: it is already clear that she and Antonio will do more than merely "talke together" and that nothing will come between them (I.i.481). Yet just when the Duchess proposes that she and her lover "plot / T'appease" (I.i.481–2)—or, perhaps more accurately, to deceive—her brothers, why should the plot of another story (itself the stuff of drama) about deception in the bedroom be coincidentally invoked? Antonio, like Webster's audience, is assumed to be familiar with the story. Are we not invited to think about the significance of this old tale here inserted into a new play—not as a source in the strong sense or as merely an allusion in the weak sense, but as a significant interlude? The naked sword, which here may allude to the Duchess's hope of Antonio's prowess in bed, stands as an emblem of the violence by which the two lovers, now joined for the first time, are finally to be separated. As I argue, the dramatist likely puts the Duchess in mind of the old tale also because the story of the perfect friendship between Alexander and Lodowicke foreshadows the themes that will later unfold: the toxic friendship between the Duchess and her twin brother and the lycanthropic twinning of Ferdinand as the wolf-man.

LYCANTHROPY

Of Webster's three changes to the story, the duke's lycanthropy carries the greatest dramatic weight and has received the most extensive critical commentary. The Grand Guignol effect alone seems sufficient reason for the addition of the lycanthrope. Webster would not have needed to delve very far into the substantial literature of lycanthropy, the idea for which he was likely to have stumbled on by happy chance in one of his nearby sources, Simon Goulart's *Admirable and Memorable Histories*, translated into English in 1607.[3] It has been left to Webster's critics to recoup that literature in order to describe the broader cultural and psychological significance of the duke's transformation. In a survey of recent critical approaches to *The Duchess of Malfi*, Dympna Callaghan finds that lycanthropy is "symptomatic of the vast and eclectic range of interpretations the play has produced."[4] The common psychological diagnosis at the time would see lycanthropy as a form of melancholy: Robert Burton classifies it along with other forms of the disease, including "*Love melancholy*," as "commonly included in head melancholy."[5] Albert H. Tricomi claims that a residual belief in the spirit world would, however, leave open the possibility that Ferdinand is possessed by a demon.[6] The doc-

tor's diagnosis of Ferdinand, mentioning both possession and a "mellencholy humour," covers both bases (V.ii.9). As a monstrous conjunction of the human and the animal, the wolf-man has his counterpart in the popular fascination—always proffered in broadsheets as true accounts, accompanied by illustrations—with monstrous births: infants born with pig snouts, tails, fur, or other animal features. Illustrations of lycanthropes typically picture the afflicted as lupine in appearance, never entirely excluding the possibility that an actual transformation might have taken place. Was it possible for Jacques Roulet, the werewolf of Angers, "to transform himself into a wolf by means of a salve given to him by his parents"?[7] In any case, if he was a beast bereft of reason, then could he be held morally responsible for his crimes? Such questions preoccupy a surprisingly large body of speculation across Europe. In a broad survey of the "theological, philosophical, and medical backgrounds of the lycanthrope," Brett D. Hirsch (like Giorgio Agamben) sees the werewolf as a borderline figure occupying a "precarious position between the human and bestial" and, as such, engaging "a range of anxieties about identity," including the troubled boundaries between the wild and the civilized and the feminine and the masculine.[8] Agamben's remark that the werewolf lurks "in the collective unconscious as a monstrous hybrid of human and animal," thence to emerge as the legal construct of the bandit as *wulfesheud*, suggests that of all the animals the wolf has a kind of primordial power to inhabit the western imagination.[9]

Like Leah S. Marcus, Hirsch also argues "that by presenting an Italian character as a werewolf, Webster endorses the popular association between Italians and depravity."[10] Thus, Webster's Malfi stands in for Italy as a sinkhole of corruption and evildoing. Ireland in particular—given that its denizens were regarded as bestial, degenerate, given to melancholy, and papist to boot—was a hotbed of lycanthropy, as both William Camden and Spenser report.[11] The duke's lycanthropy, imagined as an animal skin worn with the hair on the inside, is thus both an emblem of his duplicity and, as scholars have noted, the symbol of a kind of pathological (papist) mortification of the flesh. Lynn Enterline associates Ferdinand's malady with the symptom of a contagion in the body politic as well as a symptom of a kind of "theatrical contagion" that implicates the gaze of the viewer as well as that of the characters onstage.[12] Enterline notes that the duke's eyes are dazzled at the sight of his dead sister's face. The inevitable suggestion of Ferdinand's incestuous desire for his twin sister calls to mind for Enterline, as for other critics, an alternative version

of the Narcissus myth found in Pausanius, in which the water-gazer is given a beautiful female twin with whom he falls in love.[13]

The most widely circulated European werewolf text, *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter*, was published anonymously in London in 1590. This pamphlet recounts the life of an infamous German lycanthrope who, after many years of unspeakable mayhem, was finally caught and (unspeakably) executed in 1589. At his trial, according to the *True Discourse*, Stubbe testified that the devil "gaue vnto him a girdle which being put about him, he was straight transfourmed into the likenes of a gréedy deuouring Woolf," although he could shed his disguise and appear as an ordinary man as he stalked his next victim. Among his other depredations he committed "most wicked inceste" with his own daughter, by whom he had a child, and he even "lay by his owne Sister."[14] The frontispiece shows Stubbe as both a wolf-man and as a wolf devouring a victim (Figure 1). The following panels depict his capture, trial, and four rounds of torture that can only be described as overkill. The child Stubbe purportedly fathered on his daughter might well be imagined as a lupine hybrid.

TWINS

From this complex skein of wolf-man lore, we can draw out the threads of twinship and incest woven into the old tale of Alexander and Lodowicke. As I have noted, the lycanthrope—a twinned human and animal—belongs to the broader category of the monstrous, in which monstrous births figure prominently as objects of popular fascination. The title page of the Italian physician Fortunio Liceti's *De Monstrorum Causis, Natura et Differentiis*, originally published in Padua in 1616 and reprinted in 1634 and 1668 with lavish illustrations, is festooned with a jumble of conjoined human bodies, one with the head of an elephant and yet another with that of a ram (Figure 2). In each of the two lower corners a pair of conjoined human twins is perched on the back of a hybrid creature with a human face but with the body of a lion (on the left) and the body of a bear or a boar (on the right). Other Liceti images show children joined to their animal twin (Figure 3). The most intimate and evidently fascinating relation between twins—that in which the two are physically conjoined in suggestively erotic poses—is also illustrated in the encyclopedic works on monstrosity by Liceti and Ambrose Paré (Figure 4). Webster's early playgoer of 1613–14 could not foresee the learned

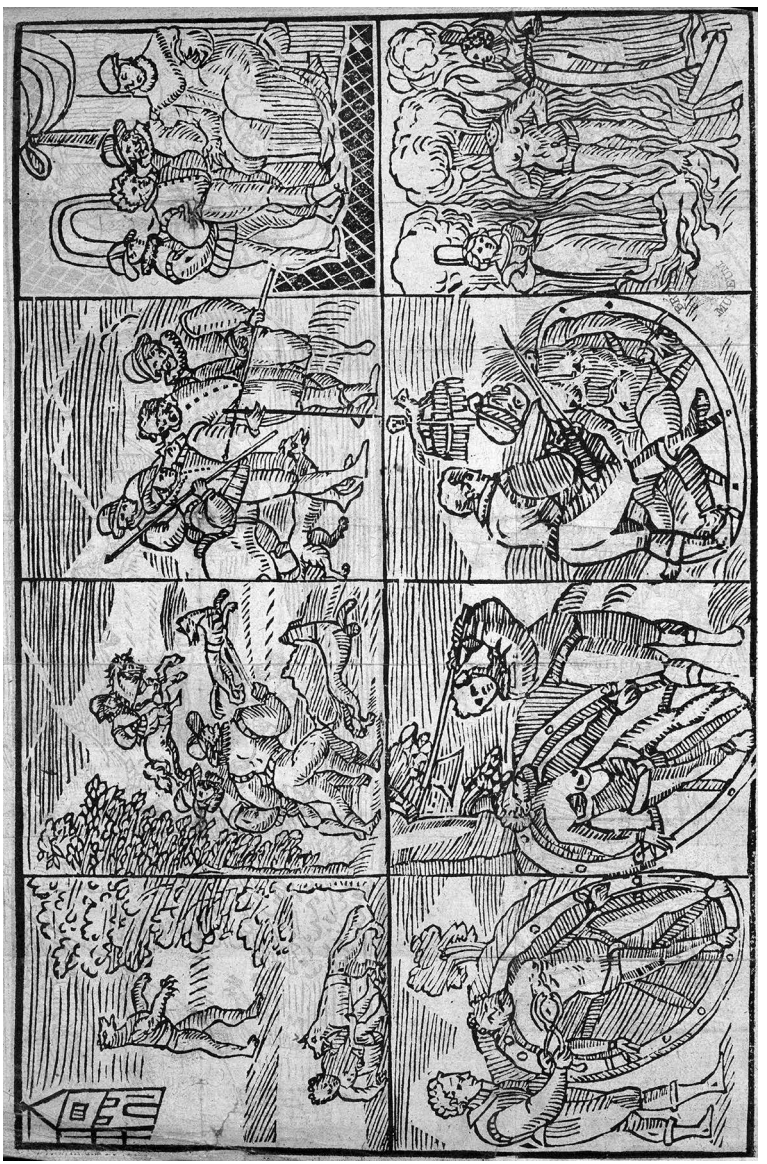


Figure 1. Frontispiece to *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter* (London, 1590). By permission © The British Library Board shelfmark C.27.a.9.

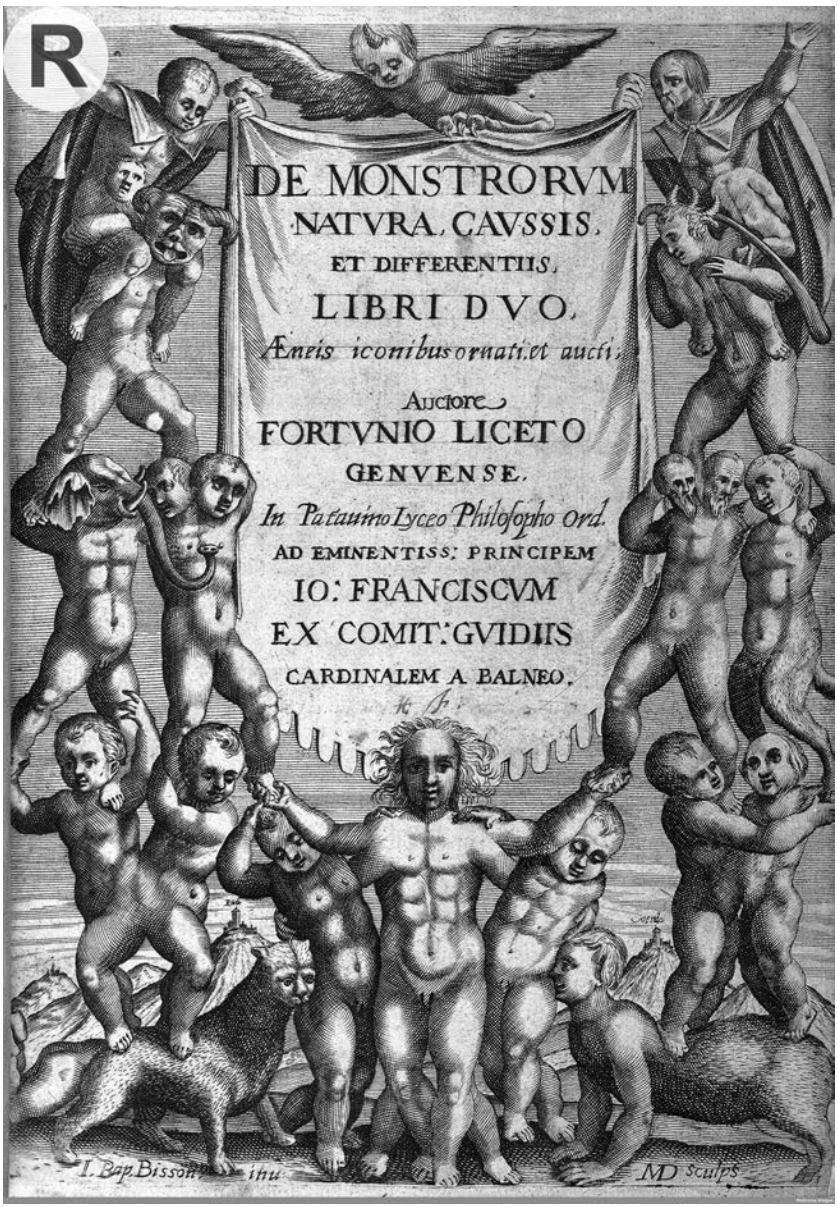


Figure 2. Fortunio Liceti, frontispiece to *De Monstrorum Caussis, Natura et Differentiis* (Padua, 1616). By permission Wellcome Library, London.

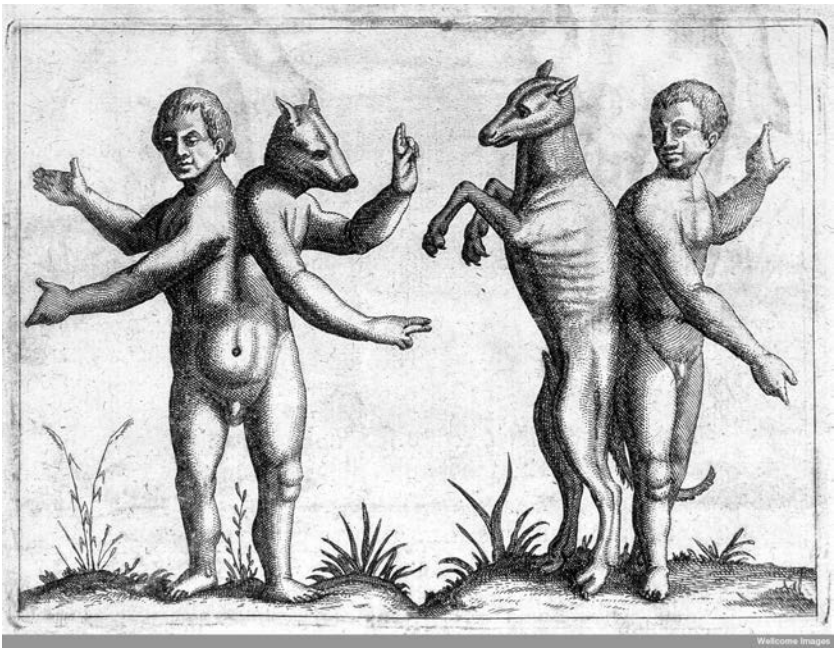


Figure 3. Fortunio Liceti and Gerardus Blasius, illustration from *De Monstris* (Padua, 1668), p. 182. By permission Wellcome Library, London.

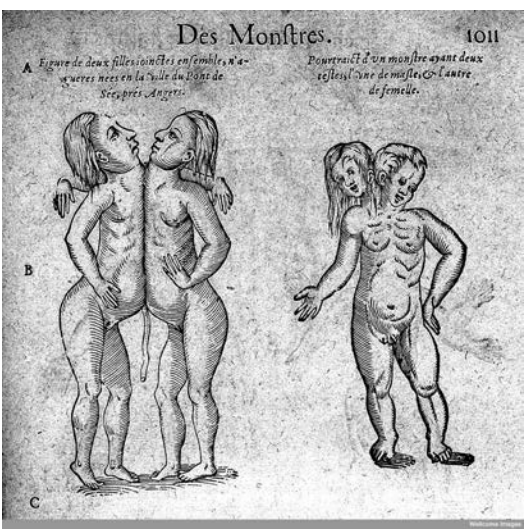
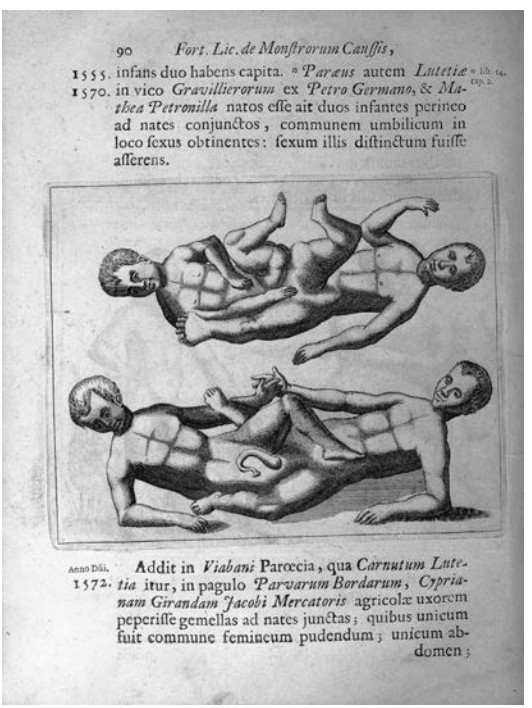


Figure 4. Ambroise Paré, illustration from *Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Paré* (Paris, 1628), p. 1001. By permission Wellcome Library, London.

tomes on monstrosity that would be published by Liceti or Paré. However, the story of Stubbe Peeter was “sold in Fleet-street at the signe of the Vine,” and both the old tale and the images of monstrous twins published in contemporary broadsheets could be purchased in “Cow lane” or near “S[t]. Sepulchrers Church.”[15] Before Liceti, such images had already been widely circulated in broadsheets such as *The True Description of Two Monsterous Children* (Figure 5).[16] The *True Description* informs the reader that the children pictured there were “laufully begotten,” thus evidently absolving the parents of any wrongdoing, but the accompanying ballad makes it clear that these “vnnaturall shapes & forms” are the signs of God’s displeasure that we all “wallow so in filthie sin.” These twins were “both alyue by the space of half an hower,” just long enough for them to be baptized. However, the illustrations accompanying such accounts typically depict “newborn” twins as older children, as in the *True Description*, or even as adults. They stand erect, fully cognizant of one another, and when attached frontally they tend to share a gaze that can

Figure 5. John Mellys, *The True Description of Two Monsterous Children* (London, 1566). By permission © The British Library Board shelfmark Huth 50.(35).

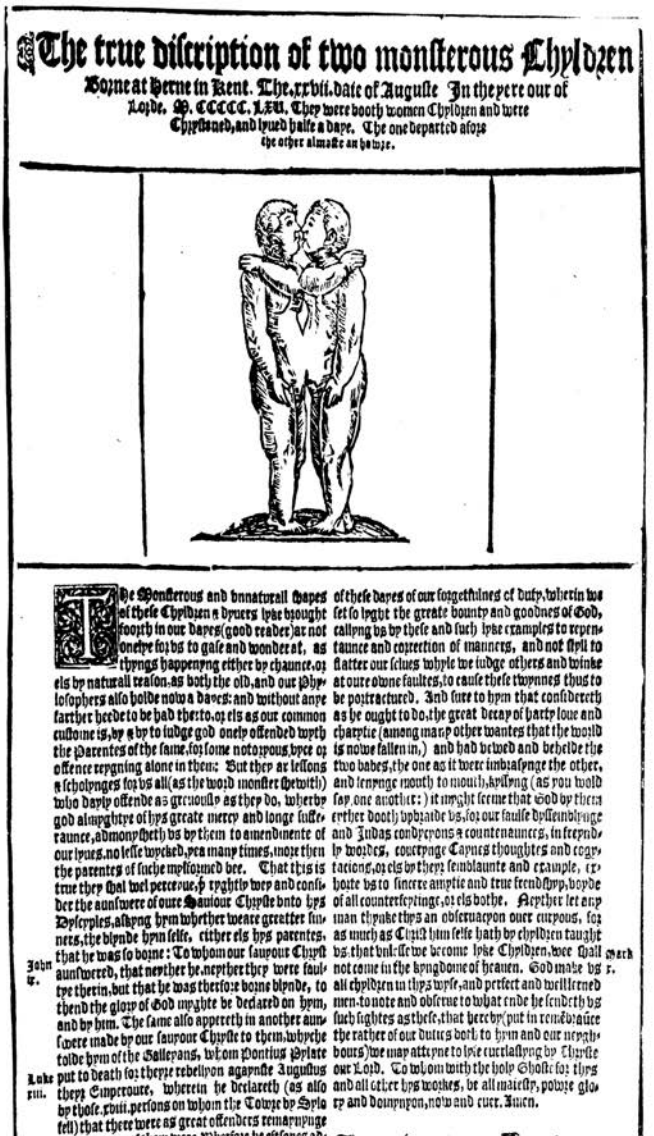
be read as fascinated, poignant, sympathetic, or libidinous. The *True Description* calls the reader's attention to "the two children hauing both their bellies fast joyned together, and imbracyng one an other with their armes." Other images, such as the twins in Liceti joined at the genitals, are more openly suggestive (Figure 6). The frontally attached twins pictured in another contribution to the same genre—*The True Discription of Two Monsterous Chyldren*—appear to be kissing, and each has a hand very near his or her own genitals (Figure 7).[17] Similar illustrations are to be found in Stephan Batman's *The Doom: Warning All Men to the Iudgement* (1581) and Ioannes Shenkius's *Monstrorum Historia* (1609). Taken out of context—that is, if one were not aware that the twins were supposed to be newborn—such images can be seen as an incestuous connection between a set of sexually aware and sexually capable adults. Nor is the sex of the twins always clear from the illustrations, creating a coupling that can appear ambiguously homo- or heteroerotic. These images can be read


90 *Fort. Lic. de Monſtrorum Cauſſis,*

1555. infans duo habens capita. [n] *Paræus* autem *Lutetiæ* [n] lib. 14. cap. 2.
1570. in vico *Gravillierorum* ex *Petro Germano*, & *Mathea Petronilla* natos eſſe ait duos infantes perineo ad nates conjunctos, communem umbilicum in loco ſexus obtinentes: ſexum illis diſtinctum fuiſſe aſſerens.

Anno Dñi. 1572. Addit in *Viabani* Paroecia, qua *Carnutum Lutetia* itur, in pagulo *Parvarum Bordarum*, *Cypriana Girandam Jacobi Mercatoris* agricolæ uxorem peperiſſe gemellas ad nates junctas; quibus unicum fuit commune femineum pudendum; unicum abdomen;

Figure 6. Fortunio Liceti and Gerardus Blasius, illustration from *De Monstris* (Paris, 1665), p. 90. By permission Wellcome Library, London.



The true discription of two monsterous Chyldren
Borne at Berne in Kent. The.xxvii. date of Auguste In the yere our of
Lorde. M. CCCCC. LXV. They were booth women Chyldren and were
Chrystned, and lyued halfe a daye. The one departed afore
the other almoste an howre.

The Monsterous and vnnaturall shapes of these Chyldren ꝑ dyuers lyke brought forth in our dayes (good reader) ar not onelye for vs to gase and wonder at, as thynges happenyng either by chaunce, or els by naturall reason, as both the old, and our Philosophers also holde now a dayes: and without anye farther hede to be had therto, or els as our common custome is, by ꝑ by to iudge god onely offended wyth the Parentes of the same, for some notorious byce or offence regnyng alone in them: But they ar lessons & scholynges for vs all (as the woid monster dewith) who dayly offende as grieuously as they do, wherby god alwaighte of hys greate mercy and longe sufferaunce, admonysheth vs by them to amendmente of our lyues, no lesse wycked, yea many times, more then the parentes of suche mpligoned bee. That this is true they shal wel perceaue, ꝑ ryghtly wey and consider the aunswere of oure Sauiour Christe vnto hys Disciples, askyng hym whether weare greatter sinners, the blynde hym selfe, either els hys parentes, that he was so borne: To whom our sauyour Christ aunswered, that neyther he, neyther they were faultye therin, but that he was therfore borne blynde, to thend the glory of God myghte be declared on hym, and by him. The same also appereth in another aunswere made by our sauyour Christe to them, whyche tolde hym of the Galileyans, whom Pontius Pylate put to death for theyre rebellyon agaynste Augustus theyr Emperoure, wherein he declareth (as also by those .xviii. persons on whom the Towre by Syloe fell) that there were as great offenders remaynynge alyue, as any of them were. Wherfore he exhortes admonyshed them to amendment of lyfe in generall: or els by their examples threatened them with as grieuous dystruction, as fell vppon any of them. These examples moued me (good reader) in consideracyon of these dayes of our forgetfulnes of duty, wherin we set so lyght the greate bounty and goodnes of God, callyng vs by these and such lyke examples to repentaunce and correction of manners, and not styll to flatter our selues whyle we iudge others and winke at oure owne faultes, to cause these wrynnes thus to be portractured. And sure to hym that considereth as he ought to do, the great decay of hartly loue and charytie (among many other wantes that the world is nowe fallen in,) and had bewed and beheelde the two babes, the one as it were imbraasynge the other, and lesynge mouth to mouth, kyssyng (as you wold say one another:) it myght seme that God by them exther booth vpbraide vs, for our fauste dysseuerbynge and Judas condycyons & countenaunces, in freyndly wordes, coueyenge Caynes thoughtes and cogytaciones, or els by theyr semblaunte and example, exhorte vs to sincere amytie and true frendshyp, voyde of all counterfeytynge, or els bothe. Neyther let any man thynke thys an obseruacyon ouer curyous, for as much as Christ hym selfe hath by chyldren taught vs, that vnlesse we become lyke Chyldren, wee shall not come in the kyngdome of heauen. God make vs all chyldren in thys wyse, and perfect and wellltemed men, to note and obserue to what ende he sendeth vs such sightes as these, that here by (put in remembraunce the rather of our dutie) we dayly to hym and our neyghbours) we may attayne to lyue eucrlastyngly by Christe our Lord. To whom with the holy Ghoste for thys and all other hys woorkes, be all maiesty, powre glory and dominyon, now and euer. Amen.

John 9.

Luke xiii.

Imprinted at London
in Fletestreat by Thomas Colwell: for Owen Rogers dwelling
at S. Sepulchers Church dore.

Figure 7. *The True Discription of Two Monsterous Chyldren* (London, 1565). By permission Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery and ProQuest. Image produced by ProQuest as part of Early English Books Online.

as incorporating in extremis the monstrous desire of becoming one flesh, of recovering an intrauterine identity—as if, one might say, attempting postpartum not to split in two, but rather to heal their imperfect rupture. The bond of identity and difference that (dis)connects the twin in the imagination of the early modern period is thus charged with the potential of illicit desire, narcissism, and bestiality.

Neither the lore of eroticized twins nor the incestuous passion of Stubbe the werewolf offers any decisive evidence to support the suspicion of a repressed incestuous impulse afflicting Webster's Duke Ferdinand. They do suggest an underlying suspicion of the duke's furious and otherwise inexplicable opposition to his sister's remarriage. Ferdinand's reason for opposing any such second nuptial is that, as a widow, she already knows "what man is" (I.i.281). What "man is" remains unexplained, except for the presumption that the widow has been schooled in such (carnal) knowledge by her first husband and should not wish for more. But where we might expect a warning against luxurious and dishonorable suitors, in the duke's mind it is the woman who is tainted if she should marry twice—as if such a choice would be a double betrayal, for any contender for her hand would supplant her brother in her affections and her dead husband in her bed. Remarriage would sever the connection to her twin and conjoin her to another, as her language strongly implies. For when she and Antonio are about to be married, the Duchess declares that the two of them "now are one" (I.i.480). She prays that "violence" may "Never untwine" the "sacred Gordian" that binds them (I.i.463–4), and she urges that they "imitate the loving Palmes" that "nev'r bore fruite devided" (I.i.468–70). At the minute her violent death is confirmed, the duke reminds—or confesses to—Bosola that "She, and I were Twinnes": should he "die this instant," he "had liv'd / Her Time to a Mynute" (IV.ii.254–6). In their bereavement, both the duke and Antonio are untwi(n)ned from the Duchess by her death. Ferdinand now imagines his own death, as if, just as he and his sister were born together, it would be timely for the two to be rejoined at the same moment in death. Part of the play's intrigue stems from its reticence to expose Ferdinand's motives at this crucial point. William Hazlitt, an acute reader of Webster, rather finds in Ferdinand's speech "not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical common-places, but the writhing and conflict, and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself!"[18] Whether passion or pretense, disclosure or deception, Ferdinand's speech implicates him along with Antonio and the Duchess in a three-ply Gordian knot the play refuses to cut.

My purpose so far has been less to penetrate the play's silence on this point than to supply the context that would, arguably, have suggested the possibility of incest more strongly to Webster's audience of 1613–14 than it does today. In particular, I have so far been concerned to excavate the connection between lycanthropy, twins, and incest. The severed limb Ferdinand is reported to carry in his madness and the dead hand he offers his sister are the emblems of his own psychic dismemberment. The loss of his twin to another leads him in effect to create a new one, a lycanthropic conjunction of the human and the animal, in which guise, and in the shadow of Stubbe Peeter, the brutality of incest finds its most direct expression.

THE "OLD TALE"

How, then, are we to understand the old tale of Alexander and Lodowicke, recollected at the moment when the Duchess allows herself to be led—or rather prompts Antonio to lead her—by the hand to their "marriage-bed"?

> I would have you leade your Fortune by the hand,
> Unto your marriage-bed:
> (You speake in me this, for we now are one)
> We'll onely lie, and talke together, and plot
> T'appease my humorous kindred; and if you please,
> (Like the old tale, in *Alexander* and *Lodowicke*)
> Lay a naked sword betweene us, keep us chast.
> (I.i.478–84)

The idea of the naked sword is a startling, if seemingly playful, suggestion, ironically intended to appease her brothers' opposition to her having any further knowledge of "what man is"—ironic, since in fact nothing will come between the Duchess and her lover that will prevent their becoming "one." In this seductive banter, the playwright might well assume that, like Antonio, his audience of 1613–14 is familiar with the story of Alexander and Lodowicke. According to Philip Henslowe's *Diary*, the Admiral's Men staged a new play titled *Alexander and Lodowick* on 14 January 1597, followed by fourteen additional performances that year, and a possible revival by the same company at the Rose theater in 1599.[19] The play has not survived, but the basic story, which seems to have ancient roots, circulated in various forms in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In a Middle English version of

the story, in which the protagonists are called *Amis and Amiloun*, the two friends are born on the same day and die on the same day. They "were so liche" that not even their own parents could have known which was which.[20] The Pepysan collection at Magdalene College, Cambridge, includes an anonymous ballad titled "The Two Faithfull Friends: The Pleasant History of Alexander and Lodowicke" to the tune of "Flying Fame" (Figure 8). In the ballad the "naked sword" is emphasized in the subtitle as perhaps the detail of greatest interest to the reader (or singer). In every retelling, the plot turns on the remarkable coincidence of two friends "so like one another, that none could know them asunder." Like the Duchess and Antonio at the moment this story is recollected, Alexander and Lodowicke too/two are one.

In different versions the details vary as to the time and place of the story, but the focus is always on the close and loving friendship between the two protagonists. The plot of one version is duly convoluted, but its salient points of contact with *The Duchess of Malfi*—twins, monstrosity, the murder of children—are striking.[21] Alexander, the better fighter, volunteers to impersonate Lodowicke in an upcoming combat, while Lodowicke will pose as Alexander in order to solemnize the marriage ceremony with Alexander's fiancée. In order to be true to Alexander, Lodowicke lays a naked sword in the marriage bed between himself and Alexander's betrothed. Throughout these adventures, the two friends are (again, conventionally) so much a mirror image that one can pass for the other: the bride herself apparently cannot tell the difference. The plot thus turns on the bed trick, a familiar if not inevitable convention of friendship narratives, by which the two friends' loving bond is triangulated by, and tested against, the attraction of a woman inserted between men.[22] When Alexander's betrothed discovers the switch she is so angry that she gives Alexander a potion that turns him into a "monsterous leper."[23] He can only be cured if he is bathed in the blood of Lodowicke's two children, with the condition that Lodowicke must kill them with his own hands. This Lodowicke is more than willing to do, so much greater is the love for his friend than the love for his children. By these means Alexander is cured, and the children are miraculously restored to life.

My argument at this point about the implication of the old tale requires a brief excursus into the genre of the male friendship narrative. From antiquity, the Ciceronian ideal of *amicitia perfecta* prescribes that two exemplary friends—Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades—should be equal in their selflessness and mutual devotion. As a sign of the bond that joins perfect

The two faithfull Friends.

The pleasant History of *Alexander* and *Lodwicke*, who were so like one another, that none could know them asunder: wherein is declared how *Lodwike* married the Princess of *Hungaria* in Alexanders name, and how each night he layd a naked sword betweene him and the *Princesse*, because he would not wrong his friend.

To the tune of *Flying Fame.*

The second part. To the same tune.

The two faithfull Friends. London Printed for Henry Gosson.

Figure 8. *The Two Faithfull Friends* (London, 1630). By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

friends, some, such as Titus and Gisippus as well as Amis and Amiloun, so closely resemble one other that they can be (mis)taken for identical twins. For Cicero and Aristotle before him, the true friend is *alter idem*, another self, their two souls so interjoined as to form *unum ex duobus*.[24] In the Bible "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (Samuel 18:1 AV). Thus St. Augustine, mourning his friend's death, is "surprised that when he was dead I was still alive, for he was my 'other self.' Someone has well said of his friend, 'He was half my soul.' I had felt that my soul and his soul was 'one soul in two bodies.'"[25] Conjoined in a single soul of which their identical appearance is the corporeal sign, the two friends are also bound by a love strengthened by their identical appearance. As Ben Jonson notes of the "Twi- / Lights" Cary and Morison,

they share a "simple love of greatnesse, and of good; / That knits brave minds, and manners, more then blood."[26] True minds can be married to each other in a love ideally purified of desire. Laurens J. Mills cites the Middle English *Athelstan* (ca. 1350) in which four men swear their abiding friendship: "Þey swoor hem weddyd breþeryn for euer more, / In trewþe trewely dede hem bynd."[27] The friendship of Spenser's Amoret and Britomart, or that between Shakespeare's Helena and Hermia notwithstanding, such an intense loving relationship as that between Orestes and Pylades can only be formed between men because, according to Michel de Montaigne, "the ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond; nor does their soul seem firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot." Ideally in the Christian world, the firmness of homosocial male friendship both replaces and sublimates any overtly sexual bond. Montaigne emphasizes that any whiff of "licentious Greek love" is rightly "abhorred by our morality."[28] Abhorred or not, the "shadow" of sodomy, as Alan Bray argues, "was never far from the flower-strewn world of Elizabethan friendship, and it could never wholly be distinguished from it."[29]

The bond between "weddyd breþeryn" is both strengthened and jeopardized when a woman comes between them. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick famously argues, following René Girard, a "calculus of power" is "structured by the relation of rivalry between two active members of an erotic triangle," such that "the bond between the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either to the beloved."[30] In *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio's apparent willingness to sacrifice his wife if it will save his friend Antonio is an exemplary instance. The reverse, a male bond severed by a woman, is suggested by the sudden breach between Polixenes and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* when Hermione unwittingly comes between them. One could think of *The Winter's Tale* as a friendship story gone terribly wrong, but before it does Polixenes recalls that he and Leontes "were as twinned lambs that did frisk i' th' sun."[31] The erotic triangle is a stock feature of the friendship plot, as a test, an obstacle, or a temptation—especially when heteronormative marriage threatens the wedded bliss of the two friends. In the story of Alexander and Lodowicke, as we have seen, the bride is so enraged at the bed trick that she turns Alexander into a leper, causing a separation from Lodowicke that apparently lasts for some years, until the moment when the two are reunited—they recognize one another by a ring—and Lodowicke proves his *amicitia perfecta* by slaughtering his own children in order to cure his friend.

To give the old tale its full imaginative weight is to reconfigure the relationship not only of the Duchess and her twin brother as the play's main antagonists, but also of the two of them in relation to Antonio as the third leg in the structural triangle of the male-friendship narrative. When, according to the physician's report, Ferdinand bids those who encounter him in the graveyard to take out their swords and "Rip up his flesh," he believes they will reveal his ulcerous wolf "on the In-side" (V.ii.18–9). The swords to be used for this purpose recall the sword that the Duchess, remembering the old tale, offered to place between herself and Antonio in their marriage bed in order to preserve her chastity. That the sword was not employed on that occasion led in due course to the birth of what Ferdinand calls the Duchess's "young Wolffes" (IV.ii.245)—as if in her depraved nature (knowing "what man is"), his sister had coupled with some unknown beast in order to produce the lupine offspring that might have been begot of a lycanthrope. The fleeting thought that these "young Wolffes" might have been Ferdinand's progeny rather than Antonio's if the latter had not taken Ferdinand's place in his sister's bed reinforces the critics' suspicion of the duke's incestuous desire for his sister, and the consequent need to ground that suspicion, whether in any glimpses we are given of the duke's psychology, or in the social forces put in play by the Duchess's taboo marriage to a commoner.[32] This suspicion is strengthened by Webster's decision to recast the brother and sister as twins, for as we have seen, the closer the bond between siblings, the greater the potential of an erotic current between them—a potential realized in the literature of monstrosity sampled above. The human conjoined with the wolf in Ferdinand's lycanthropic fantasy would then darkly mirror the monstrous intercourse between a wolf and a woman, a fantasy in which Ferdinand the wolf-man—the man, we might imagine, whose desire to couple with his sister is morbidly reconceived as his coupling instead with the beast revealed by his desires—and Antonio, the actual father of the Duchess's "young Wolffes," are interchangeable.

Rather than probe the recesses of Ferdinand's dementia in order to explain his lycanthropy and the roots of his desire, I locate both in the interrelation of the three added features I have previously examined. As lycanthropy is associated with monstrous twins and incestuous coupling, so both are tied to the story of Alexander and Lodowicke. In relation to the old tale, Webster's new tale emerges as a warped version of the friendship plot, typically involving the two loving and virtually identical friends who are born and who often die on the same day, and whose homo-

social bond is tested by the woman who comes between them. In Webster's version, Alexander's leprosy—inflicted on him by the woman who is duped by the bed trick—is transferred metaphorically to the Duchess, the blend of whose "fault, and beauty," as Ferdinand imagines, "shew like leprosie, / The whiter, the fowler" (III.iii.59–61). As in the old tale, Ferdinand kills the children of his "dearest friend" (IV.ii.267)—that is to say, of his sister—although as this tragedy rewrites the romance plot of the friendship story, no providential resuscitation awaits these innocent cubs. The ring by which Lodowicke recognizes his leprous friend Alexander circulates through Webster's play: the Duchess first gives Antonio the ring, the wedding ring from her first marriage, which she "did vow never to part with" but to her second husband (I.i.392); Ferdinand then leaves the ring—attached to a dead hand—with the Duchess "for a Love-token" (IV.i.46); and finally, at the Shrine of our Lady of Loretto, a pilgrim reports seeing Ferdinand rip his sister's wedding ring "with such violence" from off her finger, as if reclaiming what was rightfully his (III.iv.35). Passing among hands dead and alive, the ring—in the old tale, the bond of a loving marriage between male friends—here triangulates the Duchess between Antonio and Ferdinand as rivals for her hand. Bosola tells the Duchess before Ferdinand enters with the dead hand that her brother has come to "kiss your hand, / And reconcile himselfe" (IV.i.26–7). Ferdinand's offering his sister the ring plays out like a macabre wooing scene, darkly reprising the earlier one between the Duchess and Antonio. The dead hand bearing this offering also momentarily associates Ferdinand with his sister's dead first husband, a connection the duke himself imagines as he reacts to her second marriage:

> Thou art undone:
> And thou hast taine that massy sheete of lead
> That hid thy husbands bones, and foulded it
> About my heart.
>
> (III.ii.112–5)

Ferdinand also tells his twin that if she should "need a friend," she should "Send [the ring] to him, that ow'de it" (IV.i.49). But, again, to whom is the ring owed? If not to the dead first husband, then to the unknown lover, or to the anonymous dead man from whom the offered hand has been amputated, or to Ferdinand himself, who later mourns his murdered sister as his "dearest friend"? It is no coincidence that, altogether, the words "friend,"

"friends," and "friendly" appear twenty-five times in a play that everywhere reflects the ethos of friendship literature. In the play's one example of an untrammeled male bond, the word is most often exchanged between Antonio and his "noble friend Delio," his "most beloved" and "deere friend" (III.i.1 and II.ii.64). On his parting from Antonio, Delio recalls a maxim suitable to the occasion: "And (for my faith) lay this unto your brest: / Old friends (like old swords) still are trusted best" (II.ii.76–7). His advice seems to glance back at the old tale, in which the sword secures the trust between the two old friends, reinforcing their male bond even as it severs any connection between the man and the woman lying next to him. On the same subject of trust between friends but on a more cautionary note, Bosola cautions Ferdinand to "take heed":

> For to suspect a friend unworthily,
> Instructs him the next way to suspect you,
> And prompts him to deceive you.
>
> (I.i.230–3)

Ferdinand seems to appreciate Bosola's candor when Bosola later makes bold to charge him with too much self-flattery, a princely failing that can be remedied by the advice that only a true friend, and not a flatterer, can offer: "*That Friend a Great mans ruine strongely checks, / Who railes into his beliefe, all his defects*" (III.i.92–3). Delio, the exemplary friend, is given the last word in the play, yet another maxim that contrasts the oblivion that awaits the dead evildoers littering the stage with the kind of friendship that will endure beyond the grave: "*Integrity of life, is fames best friend, / Which noblely (beyond Death) shall crowne the end*" (V.v.119–20). The effect of these moralizing nuggets—the proverbial stuff of friendship narratives—is to stress the importance of the friendship bond (both strengthened and severed) in the play, even as it amplifies the theme of the old tale recalled by the Duchess.

If the standard conventions of the friendship narrative were to be observed, then we might expect that Ferdinand and Antonio should be cast as the inseparable friends whose passions (the duke's jealousy, Antonio's love) focus on the Duchess, but in ways that only strengthen their male bond. That they are enemies retains the structure of this kind of narrative but reverses the polarities of their connection from amity to animosity. Yet another turn in the friendship narrative is mobilized when Ferdinand claims his sister was his dearest friend. These twins would, as the genre anticipates, then be the loving friends in the triangle.

Whether or not we take this disclosure as a sincere expression of the brother's grief or as a calculated gesture, it reconfigures the friendship narrative so as now to construe Antonio as the one who comes between the duke and his sister-friend. We recall that true friendship between a man and a woman, as Montaigne reminds us, is not to be thought of because women's minds are not strong enough to endure the force of so powerful a bond. But as critics note, the Duchess is an extraordinarily forceful character; her strength, as opposed to the conventionally feckless role of the women in friendship stories, catalyzes her brother's hatred for Antonio. In the wooing scene she plays the masculine and masterful role against a feminized Antonio, who (as the Duchess observes) appears to be trembling, fearful, and distracted at being courted by one "borne great": "We are forc'd to woe," says the Duchess, "because none dare woe us" (I.i.427–8). In the ballad of "The Two Faithfull Friends" it is Lodowicke who each night "layd a naked sword betweene him and the Princesse, because he would not wrong his friend" (see Figure 8). In Webster's play, the Duchess wields the imaginary sword because it appears, for the moment, as if she would wrong her brother by actually coupling with another man. In this permutation of the friendship triangle, a feminized Antonio would fill the woman's place as the one who causes a breach in the loving friendship between the duke and his masculinized twin. Is the duke, then, among those who do not dare to "woe us," because to do so would betray a desire as powerful as his loathing of his sister's desire for another? Does the duke's assertion, or realization, that his sister is his "dearest friend" count as a glimpse into his otherwise well-hidden psychology or a partial recognition of his desire?

I would argue, rather, that what may be read or played as an eruption of anguish in a modern production is produced in large part as a formal effect of the imbedded subtext of the tale, which gives us leave to complicate the form of the play as, at once, a revenge tragedy and the drama of a corrupt, ultimately tragic friendship between the Duchess and her twin—whose character inhabits the imaginary of the incestuous lycanthrope merged with that of suggestively posed monstrous twins and human-animal hybrids—against which the *amicitia perfecta* of Antonio and Delio stands in contrast. This generic realignment registers and plays upon the persistence of a deeply rooted ethos of friendship more compelling to Webster's audiences than to those today. Evoking the familiar old tale thus opens the play to a reading far more significant than the brief mention of it might otherwise provoke.

NOTES

[1] John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, and Anthony Hammond, in *The Works of John Webster: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, 3 vols. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 1:467–575, V.ii.5–6. Subsequent references to *The Duchess of Malfi* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by act, scene, and line number. A full list of the changes is compiled by Webster's Cambridge editors (see pp. 678–9). In the sixty-year career of its transmission from its earliest literary source, the basic story of the Duchess underwent only a few minor changes in detail as it migrated from the thinly documented, early sixteenth-century historical event at its root through three subsequent renditions before reaching the playwright. The account of the unfortunate liaison between Antonio Bologna and the young widow and regent of the Duchy of Malfi Giovanna d'Aragona first appears in Matteo Bandello's Italian *Novelle* (1554). *The Palace of Pleasure* (in which the story of the Duchess is the twenty-third "novel" of the "Second Tome") is William Painter's 1567 translation of the tale from the French of François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1565) (see Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* [London: Henry Bynneman for Nicholas England, (1567)]; EEBO STC [2d edn.] 19124). Webster exercises a free hand in revising the Painter version, mostly for dramatic effect. For example, he develops the character of Bosolo by making him an instrument of the brothers' machinations from the beginning rather than merely Antonio's assassin at the end. As the editors of the 1995 Cambridge *Works of John Webster* note in their catalog of eleven such changes, the Julia subplot is entirely Webster's invention. Webster also had at hand Simon Goulart's *Admirable and Memorable Histories* (1607). The first performance of *The Duchess of Malfi* probably "took place in 1614 or in late 1613" (Gunby, Carnegie, and Hammond, "Date," in *Works*, 1:379–80, 380).

[2] See Gunby, *Works*, p. 601.

[3] Goulart provides Webster with another version of the Duchess plot (pp. 362–7) under the heading of "*Secret and Unequal Marriages Unfortunate*" (*Admirable and Memorable Histories*, trans. Ed. Grimeston [London: George Eld, 1607], p. 362; EEBO STC [2d edn.] 12135). No mention is made in Goulart (or in any other of Webster's sources) of any startling transformation on the part of the duke. However, nineteen pages further on, in an account of the "sharpe rauings" of the deluded (p. 384), Goulart includes a detailed discussion of lycanthropy from which Webster evidently borrows the detail of the severed leg: "I haue obserued in one of these melancholike *Licanthropes*, whom we call Wolues: for he that knew mee well, being one day troubled with his disease, and meeting me, I retired my selfe a part, fearing that he should hurt me. Hauing eyed me a little, hee passed on, being followed by a troupe of people. Hee carried then vpon his shoul|ders the whole thigh and the legge of a dead man" (p. 386). As in *The Duchess of Malfi*, a physician is brought in to cure the afflicted.

[4] Dympna Callaghan, "The State of the Art: Critical Approaches 2000–08," in *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide*, ed. Christina Luckyj (New York: Continuum International, 2011), pp. 66–86, 81.

[5] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan Smith (New York: Tudor, 1927), p. 154.

[6] See Albert H. Tricomi, "Historicising the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *SEL* 44, 2 (Spring 2004): 345–72.

[7] H. Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 228.

[8] Brett D. Hirsch, "An Italian Werewolf in London: Lycanthropy and *The Duchess of Malfi*," *EMLS* 11, 2 (September 2005): paragraphs 2.1–43, 1 and 28, http://purl.oclc.org/emls/11-2/hirswere.htm. For Sigmund Freud, too, cases like that of wolf-man enable us to descend "into the deepest and most primitive strata of mental development" (Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay [New York: Norton, 1989], p. 402).

[9] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998): In medieval legal theory, the outlaw was designated as a "wolf-man," a liminal figure "banned" to the "threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither" (p. 105).

[10] Hirsch, paragraph 33. Leah S. Marcus notes Ferdinand's intention to keep his sister "cased up like a holy relic" (I.ii.137), and she cites an anti-Catholic sermon ca. 1615 titled "Lycanthropy, or the wolf worrying the lamb" (Marcus, "The Duchess's Marriage in Contemporary Contexts," in *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide*, pp. 106–18, 111).

[11] Hirsch, paragraphs 34–5.

[12] Lynn Enterline, "'Hairy on the In-side': *The Duchess of Malfi* and the Body of Lycanthropy," *YJC* 7, 2 (Fall 1994): 85–129, 99.

[13] See Enterline, p.106.

[14] *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter, a Most Wicked Sorcerer, Who in the Likenes of a Wolfe, Committed Many Murders, Continuing This Diuelish Practice 25. Yeeres, Killing and Deuouring Men, Woomen, and Children* (London: Printed for Edward Venge, [1590]), pp. 4 and 7–8; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 23375.

[15] See *A True Discourse*, p. [ii]; and Figures 5 and 7 in this article.

[16] John Mellys, *The True Description of Two Monsterous Children* (London: Alexander Lacy for William Lewes, [1566]); EEBO STC (2d edn.) 17803.

[17] *The True Discription of Two Monsterous Chyldren, Borne at Herne in Kent* (London: Thomas Colwell for Owen Rogers, [1565]); EEBO STC (2d edn.) 6774. Mellys does not appear to have been the author of this text, despite the similarity of title.

[18] William Hazlitt, "Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth," in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931), 6:169–364, 246.

[19] See Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Walter W. Greg, 2 vols. (London: A. H. Bullen, 1908), 2:182. See also Laurens J. Mills, *One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama* (Bloomington IN: Principia Press, 1937), p. 259; and Martin Wiggins in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama, 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 3:359. According to B. Montgomerie Ranking, *Streams from Hidden Sources* (London: Henry S. King, 1872), the "old tale" stems from an ancient story in Arabic or Persian, rendered in Greek and

published as *Syntipas* in Paris in 1828 (pp. 90–1). From the Greek it was translated into a Latin romance, probably at the end of the twelfth century, as the *Historia Septem Sapientum*, a printed copy of which with the date 1490 is in the British Library (Ranking, p. 92). The story appeared in Dutch in 1473 and in English in 1520, published by Wynkyn de Worde. There are also two metrical English versions by unknown hands (Ranking, p. 93). Ranking also cites the ballad "The Pleasant History of Alexander and Lodowick," mentioned above (p. 98). Virtually the same protagonists appear under different names in a twelfth-century Latin prose text titled *Vita Amici et Amelii Carissimorum*, followed by an old-French chanson de geste titled *Ami et Amile* (ca. 1200), and roughly contemporary with an Anglo-Norman romance *Amys e Amillyoun*. This last is closest to the English poem *Amis and Amylion* (also spelled *Amiloun*) of 1275–1300, as noted in Françoise Le Saux, ed., *Amys and Amylion* (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 1993), p. 3. On the English *Amis and Amiloun*, see Mills, pp. 39–43; and J. A. Asher, *Amis et Amiles: An Exploratory Survey* (Folcroft PA: Folcroft Library Editions, 1977), pp. 5–11.

[20] Eugen Kölbing, ed., *Amis and Amiloun Zugleich mit der Altfranzösischen Quelle* (Hellbronn, 1884), line 91, qtd. in Mills, p. 39.

[21] See the summary from the anonymous collection *Roman Stories, Or the History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome* (Berwick, 1785), pp. 104–28. Alexander's father throws his young son into the sea after Alexander declares that the warbling of a nightingale presages his own "future grandeur," and that his father will one day "bring me water to wash my hands" (p. 105). Alexander survives and comes to the Egyptian Court incognito as an adult. There he solves a problem that, by the king's proclamation, makes Alexander his heir and gives him his daughter's hand in marriage. Alexander wishes to postpone the wedding, however, so he can visit the Court of the emperor, where he comes to be much beloved. Meanwhile Lodowicke, the son of the French king, also comes to serve the emperor. The two "were so like one another, that they could hardly be distinguished; as their persons were alike, so was their love to each other" (p. 108). The emperor's daughter Florentina falls in love with Alexander, while Lodowicke falls in love with Florentina. Out of loyalty to his friend, Alexander urges Florentina to love Lodowicke in return. To this she agrees, and Lodowicke begins to visit her secretly.

The king of Egypt dies, and Alexander succeeds him. Meanwhile, Lodowicke is betrayed in his amour with Florentina, and the emperor rules that the matter will be resolved by a trial by combat between Lodowicke and his accuser, the son of the king of Spain. Alexander, the better fighter, volunteers to substitute for Lodowicke in the upcoming combat, while Lodowicke will stay in Egypt posing as Alexander and will "hold all the solemnity of the nuptials" with Alexander's betrothed (p. 114). Lodowicke goes through with the wedding, but in order "that he might be true to King Alexander, he laid a naked sword" in the marriage bed between himself and Alexander's betrothed (p. 114). Alexander wins the combat, but when he returns home he finds that his fiancée is so angry at the switch of partners that she gives him a potion that turns him into a "monsterous leper" (p. 117). Thus afflicted, Alexander seeks out the newly crowned Lodowicke, who is now the emperor as well as the king of France, but the leper is turned away by the Lodowicke's courtiers, "who could not endure the sight of so deformed a monster" (p. 117). Fortunately, Lodowicke recognizes his friend by a ring he had given him.

Lodowicke is told by his physicians that only a miracle can cure Alexander. The miracle duly appears when Alexander has a vision that he can be cured if he is bathed in the blood of Lodowicke's two children, with the condition that "the emperor must kill them with his own hands, and afterwards bathe him in their blood" (p. 120). At the end, King Alexander identifies himself to his remorseful father as the son once thrown into the sea—and the father, as predicted, brings water to wash his son's hands.

[22] In another permutation of the triangle, "The Wonderful History of Titus and Gisippus" in Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governour*, Titus is given leave by his friend Gisippus to take the latter's place in the marriage bed so that Titus might satisfy his desire for the lovely Sophronia before Gisippus resumes his rightful place (*The Boke Named the Governour* [London, 1531], book 11, chapter 12; EEBO STC [2d edn.] 7635).

[23] *Roman Stories*, p. 117.

[24] See Cicero, *De Amicitia*, chapter 21, referenced in Mills, p. 13. Mills's *One Soul* remains the most comprehensive survey of Renaissance friendship literature. As Robert Stretter notes, the tradition that "male friendship constitutes the supreme bond can be traced as far back as Pythagoras, who is credited as the source of Aristotle's memorable assertion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that 'a friend is another self'" (Stretter, "Cicero on Stage: *Damon and Pithias* and the Fate of Classical Friendship in English Renaissance Drama," *TSLL* 47, 4 [Winter 2005]: 345–65, 347).

[25] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), p. 59, 4.6.11.

[26] Ben Jonson, "To the Immortall Memorie, and friendship of That Noble Paire, Sir Lvcivs Cary, and Sir H. Morrison," in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 8:242–7, lines 92–3 and 105–6.

[27] Mills, p. 38.

[28] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Friendship," in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 135–44, 138.

[29] Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 40–61, 56–7. See also Bray's *The Friend* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992); and studies by Jeffrey Masten on the permeable boundary between homosexuality and male friendship in the early modern period, e.g., "Toward a Queer Address: The Taste of Letters and Early Modern Male Friendship," in "The Work of Friendship: In Memoriam Alan Bray," ed. Jody Greene, special issue, *GLQ* 10, 3 (2004): 367–84.

[30] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Gender and Culture Series (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), p. 21.

[31] Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), I.ii.67.

[32] See Frank Whigham, "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *PMLA* 100, 2 (March 1985): 167–86. Whigham looks at the play in an "anthropological light," arguing that "social-structural relations come into view among Ferdinand's incestuous inclination, his sister's cross-class marriage, and Antonio's and Bosola's upward social mobility" (p. 167). On this view, Antonio's feminization in the wooing scene redoubles his social inferiority at the level of gender, as subservient to the domineering Duchess.